11th February, 2004, wherein GAIL was acknowledged as a preferential buyer of gas from these blocks. An MoU to the above effect was signed between the two countries on 9th March 2006. In terms of the provisions contained in the LOI and MoU, GAIL completed a Detailed Feasibility Report (DFR) for an onland pipeline from Myanmar passing through the North Eastern States of India. The highlights of DFR were presented to Myanmar Government and consortium partners on May 3, 2006 at Yangon.

The Myanmar Government invited bids for export of gas on 9th August 2006. GAIL submitted a competitive bid to Myanmar Government. Myanmar Government *vide* their letter dated 2nd October 2006 intimated to the bidders that they were reviewing their decision to sell this gas through pipeline, as the price quoted by different bidders did not meet their expectations. Subsequently, Government of Myanmar invited bids for sale of 3.5 MMTPA of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). GAIL again submitted its bid. The matter was discussed in various meetings held between Government of Myanmar and Consortium between January and March 2007. During a meeting on 10th January 2007 at Nay Pyi Taw (NPT), it was informed by Myanmar Government that a part of gas from these blocks would be used for domestic supply and that export option would be decided only after the completion of the remaining drilling in A-3 block and reassessment of reserves. It was also indicated that export of gas through LNG Project, pipeline to India and pipeline to Thailand were the options under consideration and that pipeline to China was no more under consideration.

However, in the meeting held in February 2007 between Myanmar Government and PetroChina, Myanmar Government decided that the gas from A1 and A3 blocks would be sold to China through the pipeline route. This was conveyed by Myanmar Government during a meeting held at Nay Pyi Taw (NPT) on March 16,2007. GAIL impressed upon the other partners and Myanmar Government that GAIL's pipeline offer was still the most competitive and offered optimum value for them due to proximity of India to these fields. However, Myanmar Government's decision to sell the gas to China remains as of now.

Promotion of tourism schemes abroad

*124. SHRI DHARAM PAL SABHARWAL: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to promote schemes like Medical Tourism, Beach Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Pilgrimage Tourism and Desert Tourism abroad before the commencement of Commonwealth Games in 2010;

(b) if so, the details of Government's plan; and

(c) the total amount earmarked for promotion of tourism activity before the Games?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Tourism promotes a number of themes including Medical Tourism, Beach Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Pilgrimage Tourism and Desert Tourism in the overseas market through print, TV, Internet and Outdoor Media. In addition,

information is regularly hosted in the official website of the Ministry for worldwide promotion and disseminated through the Indiatourism Offices in the country and abroad.

(c) The amount earmarked for overseas promotion during the year 2007-08 is Rs. 165 crore. The allocation for subsequent years in the Eleventh Five Year Plan has not been finalized.

Erosion control in the North East

*125. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) the details of funds allocated for erosion control in the North East by the Brahmaputra River;

(b) the time limit of implementation of the said projects considering the enormous loss of land;

(c) whether Government are aware of the fact that such massive erosion was taking place;

(d) whether the reasons for the massive erosion is deforestation; and

(e) if so, whether any dedicated afforestation projects have been initiated?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ): (a) and (b) Flood management and erosion control being within the purview of the State Governments, the related schemes are being implemented by the States concerned. However, with a view to assist the State Governments, the Government of India had approved a scheme in December, 2004 for taking up of Critical Flood Control and Anti-Erosion measures in Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys in the North Eastern Region including Sikkim and West Bengal (North Bengal area) at an estimated cost of Rs.150.00 crores. Subsequently, the cost of the scheme was enhanced to Rs.225 crores in September, 2006, out of which a sum of Rs.205 crores was meant for the State Governments and a sum of Rs.20 crores for Brahmaputra Board. The assistance was in the form of 90% as Central share and 10% to be provided by the States. Keeping in view the requirements projected by the State Governments, an amount of Rs. 146.20 crore has so far been released to the various State Governments in the North Eastern region including Sikkim and West Bengal. The details are given in the Statement (*See* below).

In addition to the above, the Government of India has also taken up the execution of some of the schemes relating to anti-erosion measures in the North Eastern region through Brahmaputra Board with 100% Central funding.

1. **Protection of Majuli Island:** Based on the recommendations of Expert Committee immediate measures for protection of Majuli Island were taken up by the Brahmaputra Board in January, 2004 at estimated cost of Rs.6.22 crores and the scheme was completed in February, 2005. Another project amounting to a sum of Rs.86.56 crores was formulated by the Brahmaputra Board and its Detailed Project Report (DPR) was approved by the Central Water Commission. Out of this, Phase I Scheme was approved by the Government of India and was taken up for execution